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ABSTRACT

The Florida Department of Education has adopted state-wide goals and performance objectives which can ultimately serve as the basis of a non-time based school. In such a system, student performance will be the measure of an individual's success, as opposed to merely the number of years spent in the classroom; additional characteristics will include year-round operation, individualized learning, continuous evaluation, flexible space, differentiated staffing, non-traditional grading and community involvement. Students and parents will set goals and plan programs; these will consist of learning segments comprised of clusters of performance objectives. Computer-managed instructional systems will assist students in registering and in undergoing pre-evaluation, learning experiences and post-evaluation. Lastly, classroom organization and teacher and administrator roles will be greatly altered to allow individuals to work at their own paces and to relate to educators as learning aids and consultants. (PB)

IMPLEMENTATION, OPERATION, AND MANAGEMENT OF A

NON-TIME BASED SCHOOL

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Ned and Jed are the same age - they come from nearly identical socio-economic backgrounds. Both were exposed to a wide variety of experiences before they entered school and they're both healthy, above average intellectually, physically normal, energetic, and inquisitive growing boys, who have spent three full years in the same classrooms, in the same elementary school in Florida.

Despite similar background and similar experiences, similar mental and physical characteristics, it appears that Jed has made a great deal more progress in learning to perform the computational skills of mathematics, despite the fact that he and Ned have both spent four years enrolled in the identical educational environment.

To become fourth graders - Ned and Jed have met a variety of legal and traditional requirements, and for a variety of reasons, legal and traditional, many of these requirements equate the time that Ned and Jed have spent in school with achievement. If they stay in school to earn a high school diploma, they'll have other requirements to meet, and many of these too, will focus on insuring that Ned and Jed have spent the legal minimum of minutes, or hours, or days, or years in a particular classroom, taking particular subjects.

Time served in prison may serve society's need to isolate those who are unable to obey the rules of society, but just putting in time, whether in prison or in school, does not guarantee social, emotional, or intellectual development. So, at the end of twelve years, both boys get the same high school diploma. But, there is a great difference in demonstrated achievement. As educators and the public have become increasingly critical of rewarding students for time served in school, the Florida Department of Education has taken the initiative to determine what kind of a school program would use a standard, other than time, as a measure of accomplishment that realistically measures a pupil's performance in school.

Remembering Ned and Jed, the differences between them were in their ability to perform certain specific arithmetical operations - so certainly in a school which seeks to eliminate traditional time-based standards of achievement, and find more realistic measures of success - the most important standard of achievement would be performance - the ability to perform a specified task related to the student's career and educational goals.

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And, although, in this non-time based program performance will be the measure of achievement and growth, the school's program must be sufficiently flexible to provide each pupil with a chance to grow toward individual goals which fulfil his unique human potential.

Beginning from these two basic premises the Florida Department of Education has developed additional criteria which will characterize a non-time based program. Some of the characteristics of a non-time based school are: year round operation, individualized learning, continuous evaluation, flexible space, differentiated staffing, no traditional grades, and community involvement.

While the non-time based program may have all these characteristics, the characteristics most critical to a non-time based school are that each student's achievement is measured by demonstrated performance and each student has the opportunity to learn at his individual rate in his own individual learning style. For example: Eventually each of these four students must demonstrate satisfactory performance in basic skills of mathematics. But, the non-time based program will make provision for individual rates of learning. And because students learn differently, the non-time based program makes provision for individual learning styles. Some students learn best from visual material, and again other students must be in a semi-isolated situation for optimum learning.

So, what is the source from which the program of learning is drawn for the non-time based learning center? The program of learning for the non-time based learning center is derived from the state goals of education and the long range educational and vocational goals of its individual students. Upon the recommendation of the Florida Department of Education, the Florida Board of Education in 1971 adopted State Goals for Education in these broad areas. Within each of these broad goal areas, the the Florida Department of Education is now developing specific performance objectives. Therefore, the program of learning for the non-time based learning center will draw heavily on these objectives for the seven goal areas.

The program of learning for the school must also focus on the individual educational and career goals of its students. From the state goals and the individual career and educational goals, the student in a non-time based learning center can develop his own plan of learning.

In a non-time based program, the student and his parent have a major responsibility for developing the student's learning plan. Of course, the parent and student may draw heavily on the learning center staff for information and consultation in developing his individual learning plan. Once a student has determined his long range goals, the educational plan must be built from a number of educational experiences known as learning segments. Each learning segment is composed of a number of related performance objectives.

And now, let's see how two students entering a non-time based learning center develop and implement their learning plan. In a program of individualized instruction it is essential to have a well planned management information system which is computerized. As these students move through the registration procedure, data is collected which will be introduced into their electronic record.

This record is further developed through a conference of the students and their parents with the center's learning placement and evaluation specialist. The parent, the pupil, and the learning placement and evaluation specialist discuss the pupil's past educational experience, the program of learning in a non-time based learning center, and the pupil's long range occupational and

educational goals. As the outcome of this conference, a tentative learning plan is developed. A student's initial placement in the program of learning is based upon his tentative learning plan and a pre-evaluation of the student's achievement.

Now the student is assigned to a learning resource area most appropriate to the student's plan. Here students meet their learning consultant who will be their primary day-to-day contact with the learning center.

One of the first responsibilities of the learning consultant is to assist the student to begin work on a learning segment.

A student's learning plan will consist of a number of learning segments. Each of these segments is further divided into clusters of related objectives.

As a student starts a learning cluster, a pre-evaluation is taken to determine if the student has already mastered any of the objectives in that cluster. The objectives he has already mastered are entered in the student's record. And he moves on to those activities associated with the remaining objectives. For each objective the student receives a list of possible activities, references, and suggested instructional aids. These are designed to help him demonstrate the performance specified for achieving that objective. When the student feels that he has successfully mastered all the objectives in a cluster, he takes an interim evaluation. Let's follow a student through a cluster and see how his efforts are recorded in a management information system.

Consider that a student is working on a pre-evaluation of a cluster of objectives.

When the student completes the pre-evaluation, he takes it to the evaluating and recording aide for checking. As the student demonstrates mastery of an objective, either by success on the pre-evaluation or by demonstrating the performance required for that objective.....

The aide will record completion on a special form which can be read by an optical scanning device for input to the computer. Where mastery was not demonstrated on the pre-evaluation, the student engages in suggested activities which are designed to assist in demonstrating proficiency in those objectives:

All may not be smooth sailing. The student may experience difficulty in pursuing the activities suggested for that objective.

At that point the learning consultant again enters the picture, this time to suggest alternate approaches or to make any necessary explanations.

When a student feels that he is capable of demonstrating mastery of an objective, he records this objective on a sheet in his folder. The folder is then placed in the aide's file for recording on his optically read sheet.

Having demonstrated mastery of the objectives in a cluster to his satisfaction, the student goes to the evaluation recording aide to obtain an interim evaluation for the cluster. The evaluation completed, the student returns to the aide who checks the evaluation and records the results.

Sometimes the evaluation is completed by the student. On other occasion all or part are administered by a learning consultant.

What kind of school organization and staffing are needed to support the performance based systematic program of a non-time based learning center?

The chief administrative officer of a learning center for the early school years is the learning center manager. He is assisted by a central office staff. The manager and the central staff provide leadership and support services for the program of learning in the individual learning pod or learning resource area.

Pods normally contain from 100 to 200 students. In each pod, a team coordinator provides general leadership and supervision. A coordinator is assisted by learning consultants who work directly with the students. On the staff of each pod are support personnel such as an evaluation and recording aide, an instructional aide, and a clerical aide. Additional part time support personnel can be employed from among retired teachers, artists, and other citizens of the community.

While the manager has final responsibility in the learning center, much of the policy making and administrative decisions are shared with the staff. The main policy making body is the senate. The cabinet composed of members of the learning center staff is an advisory body of the manager on administrative operations. The basic committees of the center are: The environment committee, and the staff composition committee.

The senate is composed of a manager, the three professional associates of the manager, the pod coordinators, and the representatives of the learning consultants, the aides, the students, and the parents.

The cabinet is the body which advises the manager on the day-to-day operations and on administrative procedures relative to the center. The manager is chairman of the cabinet. Other members of the cabinet are the pod team coordinators and the three professional associates of the manager.

A successful program of individualized instruction requires that the center maintain a day-to-day inventory on the exact status of each student in the learning program. And because each student is working on his own learning plan, it is probable that the status of each student will change daily. This situation generates a volume of records which could be overwhelming. To maintain all these records manually may be a nearly impossible task or be very costly.

However, if record keeping functions are properly designed, they can be carried on efficiently and economically by a computer based management information system. Among the essential records kept with the help of a computer are reports for all students, showing their progress on any learning segments on which they are currently working, a daily printed test of resources allocated to a secondary student, a report to learning consultants of the status of the students that are working on a specific learning segment, a report to parents in a parents' language describing the objectives which the student has completed, and a master record of the student, listing the learning segments completed in his individualized learning plan. This master record can be retrieved at any time for conferences with the student or his parent.

An alternate approach to paper copy reports is this cathode ray tube presentation which could also display the record of the student's progress.

There are many advantages for the student in a learning center based around individualized instruction.

The non-timed based program has advantages for parents.

And for the citizens of Florida, a non-timed based program of learning offers advantages.

While a non-timed based program of learning may be the ultimate design for a program which emphasizes individualized instruction, few schools now have either the resources or the skills to implement such a program. Yet, in the near future, many schools will take the first steps towards development of a non-timed based program. Eventually, as skills improve and resources are increased, these schools will be able to fully develop non-timed based programs which emphasize individuality and reward performance.